

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 HA-05 TRSE-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4586
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 11003

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PK, PINT
SUBJECT: GENERAL ZIA DIGS IN

1. UPON HIS RETURN NOVEMBER FIFTH FROM HIS MID-EAST TRIP, CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR (CMLA) ZIA TOLD THE PRESS THAT BOTH MARCH AND OCTOBER 1978 WERE SUITABLE "WEATHER-WISE" FOR ELECTIONS AND THEY WOULD BE HELD "THE SOONER THE BETTER." WHETHER ELECTIONS ARE HELD AS EARLY AS MARCH, OR AS LATE AS EARLY 1979 AS SPECULATED IN A RECENT INTELLIGENCE REPORT, ZIA AND HIS COLLEAGUES ARE BEGINNING TO DIG IN FOR A LONGER THAN EXPECTED STAY.
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2. WE STILL BELIEVE ZIA IS WELL-INTENTIONED AND FIND HIS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE STATEMENTS THAT HE DOES NOT WANT TO BE CMLA PERSUASIVE. HOWEVER, THE POLITICAL REALITIES-IN SOME MEASURE ATTRIBUTABLE TO HIS OWN ACTIONS- OF CONTEMPORARY PAKISTAN HAVE FORCED ZIA TO REMAIN IN OFFICE. THESE REALITIES CENTER ON THE FACT THAT A BHUTTO ELECTION

VICTORY IS UNACCEPTABLE TO THE MILITARY AND THERE IS A VERY REAL POSSIBILITY OF A PPP VICTORY IF ELECTIONS ARE HELD NOW.

3. RECENT STEPS TAKEN BY THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION (MLA) INDICATE THAT ZIA HAS AT LAST ACCEPTED THE REALITY

OF REMAINING IN POWER AND IS CONSEQUENTLY DETERMINED TO MAKE WHAT HE SEES AS BENEFICIAL CHANGES DURING THE MILITARY'S EXTENDED TENURE. REVISIONS IN THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM EMPHASIZING THE DREE-ENTERPRISE BENT OF ZIA AND HIS ADVISERS WERE RECENTLY REPORTED BY THE EMBASSY. CHANGES IN THE PENAL CODE WHICH HIGHLIGHT "ISLAMIC" PUNISHMENTS HAVE GAINED WORLDWIDE ATTENTION, OFTEN TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE MLA'S REPUTATION.

4. ZIA ALSO REPORTEDLY PLANS CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT MACHINERY AND THE ARMY TO FACILITATE MILITARY RULE. DURING HIS AIRPORT NEWS CONFERENCE, ZIA SAID THAT HE WILL ESTABLISH A "CONCIL OF ADVISORS" AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. POLITICAL OBSERVERS SPECULATE THAT ZIA WILL APPOINT SIX TECHNICIANS TO THE COUNCIL TO BRING OTHERS MORE FAMILIAR WITH THE SPECIFICS OF RUNNING THE COUNTRY DIRECTLY INTO THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS. JUDGING FROM HIS RECENT APPOINTMENTS AS SPECIAL ADVISORS, ZIA'S COUNCIL WILL BE WEIGHTED IN FAVOR OF CONSERVATIVE, PROSPEROUS REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TRADITIONAL

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RULING CLASSES IN PAKISTAN. DAO IS REPORTING SEPARATELY PENDING CHANGES IN THE ARMY HIERARCHY WHICH WILL FREE ZIA TO DEVOTE MORE TIME TO NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND LESS TIME TO THE ARMY.

5. THE EXUBERANCE WITH WHICH PAKISTAN'S MEDIA GREETED ZIA'S DECLARATIONS OF FREEDOM OF THE PRESS HAS BEEN DAMPENED BY INC KASED MLA CONTROL OVER THE NEWS. FOUR EDITORS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED BY THE MLA ON CHARGES OF PRINTING MATERIAL IN VIOLATION OF MARTIAL LAW REGULATIONS. ALTHOUGH SOME OF THESE ARRESTS MAY BE ASCRIBED TO OVERZEALOUSNESS IN THE LOWER MLA RANKS, PAKISTANI JOURNALISTS HAVE NOTED A DISTINCT TIGHTENING OF THE WIDE-OPEN PRESS ATMOSPHERE WHICH EXISTED AFTER THE JULY FIFTH TAKEOVER.

6. PUBLIC REACTION TO GENERAL ZIA'S PROLONGATION IN OFFICE HAS BEEN MINIMIZED, PAKASTANIS WELCOME THE RESPITE FROM THE INTERNECINE POLITICAL FIGHTING WHICH HAS SAVAGED THE COUNTRY. THERE ARE MANY IN THE BUSSINESS COMMUNITY WHO PREFER THE STABILITY AND GENERALLY LESS "SOCIALISTIC"

ECONOMIC POLICIES MILITARY RULE HAS BROUGHT. MOST ELEMENTS IN THE PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE WANT EARLY ELECTIONS ONLY IF A PNA GOVERNMENT IS GUARANTEED. OTHERWISE MILITARY RULE IS PREFERABLE TO A RETURN TO PPP CONTROL.

7. AT THE SAME TIME, MANY PAKISTANIS STILL HAVE A PERSISTENT DESIRE FOR AN ACCOUNTABLE AND REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT AND HAVE BEEN DISAPPOINTED WITH THE EXTENSION OF MILITARY RULE. THE PPP WANTS TO HAVE EARLY THE ELECTIONS IT IS CONFIDENT IT COULD WIN, AND THE DEGREE OF OPPOSITION TO ZIA WILL DEPEND IN PART ON THE PPP'S FUTURE PLANS. WE UNDERSTAND THE PARTY IS WAITING FOR THE SUPREME COURT'S DECISION ON BEGUM BHUTTO'S CASE WHICH CONTESTS HE CONFIDENTIAL

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CONSTITUTIONALITY OF MARTIAL LAW. THE COURT HAS ANNOUNCED IT WILL DELIVER ITS JUDGMENT SOMETIME THIS WEEK, PROBABLY ON THURSDAY.

8. THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION REMAINS STABLE. WE HAVE RECEIVED NO REPORTS OF STREET VIOLENCE DIRECTED AGAINST THE MLA SINCE SMALL, LOW-SCALE PPP DEMONSTRATIONS IN LAHORE SEVERAL WEEKS AGO. ALTHOUGH QUIET ON THE SURFACE, PAKISTAN'S POLITICAL SCENE IS AFFECTED BY SO MANY UNKNOWNNS AND DEPENDENT ON SO MANY ACTORS THAT ANY LONG-RANGE PROGNOSIS WOULD BE HIGHLY SPECULATIVE. MOST OBSERVERS AND JOURNALISTS AGREE, HOWEVER, THAT THE PRESENT CALM IS MORE A FUNCTION OF CONFUSION AS TO WHERE THE NATION IS HEADING THAN OF GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH THE COUNTRY'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT. HUMMEL

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